DPI PROGRAMME Update

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

UN Information Centres newsletter

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UPCOMING EVENTS

5-16 February
Third Preparatory Committee Meeting for Habitat II

6-9 February
ECOSOC, Organizational Session

14 February
Committee for the UN Population Award

21 February - 5 March
Special Committee on the UN Charter and on Strengthening the Role of the UN

28 February
General Assembly, Resumed Fiftieth Session

29 February
Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Ninth Session

31 January 1996

ROME AND LONDON HONOUR UN50

Photo: Servizio Fotografico / Arturo Mari

Secretary-General and Mrs. Boutros-Ghali meet with Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recalled important UN achievements and looked optimistically towards the future of the Organization at Fiftieth Anniversary ceremonies held in Rome and London on 9 and 10 January.

Speaking at a special session of the Italian Parliament convened in honour of UN50, the Secretary-General said that the global society in which we lived was as much a source of hope as it was a source of concern, adding that the UN should keep pace with major changes and identify the values upon which our emerging society must be based **(SG/SM/5965)**.

Democratic principles

Noting that democracy was one of these important values, he said democratic principles are the most respectful of the human individual and the most apt to maintain peace and promote development. "Democratizing States is one of the principle goals of the UN", he said, adding that the Organization, working towards this goal, has conducted more than 60 electoral assistance operations since 1992. He also emphasized the importance of democratizing relations among States and said the UN would devote itself to involving multinational corporations and financial institutions into the process, so that they might become agents of development and social integration.

While in Rome, the Secretary-General also met with Pope John Paul II and attended an event hosted by Mayor Francesco Rutelli and Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli **(SG/SM/586)**. Both **UNICs Rome** and **London** provided information and logistical assistance to the Secretary-General, and kept Headquarters informed with daily coverage of his activities.

Arriving in London on 10 January, the Secretary-General met with Prime Minister John Major, planted a tree outside the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in honour of UN50 and delivered the keynote address at a ceremony commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first session of the UN General Assembly, held on 10 January 1946 in Central Hall, Westminster. Highlighting several milestones achieved over the past half century, he reported that multilateralism was alive and well today, with the UN serving as a working machinery for international cooperation. "The UN has steadily strengthened and reinforced its own universality and, therefore, its authority and legitimacy as a world forum", he said **(SG/SM/5869)**.

UN achievements

Among the UN's many achievements, the Secretary-General noted that it had solved disputes and helped to bring peace, development and democracy to every continent. It had also successfully overseen decolonization and helped to abolish apartheid. Also, UN peace-keeping had established a distinguished record in countries such as Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique. Looking optimistically to the future, the Secretary-General said that the UN must apply the will and determination of the early days of the Organization to the problems of the 1990s.

GA CONCLUDES 50TH SESSION

The General Assembly, meeting from 19 September to 22 December, took action that was both historic and far-reaching. Among the most notable events was the Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Session, where Member States renewed their commitment to the UN as the Organization best suited to address their concerns and needs at the international level. In addition, the Assembly made important decisions regarding development, the creation of an international criminal court, follow-up to recent UN world conferences and UN reform.

UN50 special session

An unprecedented number of world leaders participated in the Special Commemorative Session from 22 to 24 October: 91 heads of State, eight vice-presidents, one crown prince, 37 prime ministers, 10 deputy prime ministers, 21 foreign ministers, and nine chairmen of delegations. They called for revitalization of the General Assembly, expansion of the Security Council and the strengthening of ECOSOC. They also urged Member States to pay their UN assessments in full and on time, promising to provide the twenty-first century with a "UN equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose names it was established" **(GA/8969)**. In addition, participants pledged to promote peaceful settlement of disputes, reaffirmed the right to self-determination of all peoples, called for extraordinary measures by all countries to confront extreme poverty, reiterated the equal rights of men and women and reaffirmed that all human rights were universal and indivisible **(GA/9048)**. These priorities were reflected in action taken by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

Development

Regarding development, the Assembly agreed to hold a two-day high-level dialogue at its next session on international economic cooperation for development. The date and focus of the discussion will be decided in the context of the ad hoc open-ended working group on agenda for development **(GA/EF/2689)**. It also decided to convene the ninth session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX), from 27 April to 11 May 1996, and absolved South Africa of its unpaid assessments accrued from 1974 to 1994, when it was suspended from participation while under apartheid rule.

International criminal court

In response to the increase in transnational crime, the Assembly created a preparatory committee to draft a convention for the establishment of an international criminal court that would concentrate on exceptionally serious crimes of international concern- - genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and aggression **(GA/8912)**. It was emphasized that the court's jursdiction should complement that of national courts and existing procedures for international cooperation in criminal matters and would obviate the need for establishing ad hoc tribunals **(A/AC.244/2)**.

UN conferences

Following up on the recent continuum of UN global conferences, the Assembly adopted important resolutions regarding the implementation of action plans for both ICPD and WSSD and endorsed the FWCW's Platform for Action. In addition, the Assembly launched an International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996), proclaimed the first UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) and adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Assembly also welcomed the decision of the Conference of FAO to convene a World Food Summit to take place in Rome from 13 to 17 November **(GA/EF/2714)**.

UN reform

The question of UN reform was also raised during the fiftieth session. Assembly President Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal met monthly with the five working groups established to study reform measures: agenda for development; agenda for peace; the Security Council; the financial situation of the UN; and strengthening and revitalizing the Organization. Much of the preparatory work has already been completed and more than 90 meetings were scheduled to take place between 15 January and 29 March, signifying a serious commitment by the working groups to put together a global package for reform **(GA/9043)**.

DPI AND UNESCO CONVENE MEDIA SEMINAR IN YEMEN

"The UN reaffirmed its commitment to press freedom, pluralism and the dignity of journalists and writers during its fiftieth anniversary", said Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information Samir Sanbar, as the Seminar on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Arab Media opened in Sana'a on 7 January with more than 140 Arab journalists attending.

Photo: UNIC Sana'a

Samir Sanbar, ASG for Public Information, addresses the Arab Media Seminar.

Mr. Sanbar, speaking on behalf of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, also said the media contributed to the current decisive period in the economic, social and cultural development of the Arab region. The right to information and freedom of expression were basic prerequisites for socio-economic development and political freedom. Citing the assassination of more than 70 journalists last year--more than 30 in Algeria alone-- he said attacks on the media and the killing of journalists should not be tolerated **(PI/926)**. Statements were also made by UNESCO Assistant Director-General Henrikas Yushkiavitshus and the Prime Minister of Yemen, Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani.

The five-day seminar, a joint initiative of DPI and UNESCO with the active assistance of **UNIC Sana'a**, covered such topics as independence and pluralism of the media; public service media; the legal, cultural and political framework for a free and pluralistic media; censorship; the training of media professionals and the strengthening of professional media organizations.

The seminar's Final Declaration recognized the efforts made by a number of Arab States towards democracy, freedom of expression and press freedom. It also called upon all Arab States to provide or reinforce constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom of expression and the press.

In adopting the Declaration, participants deplored cases in the Arab world where journalists, publishers and other media practitioners became victims of harassment, physical assault, threats, arrest, detention, torture, abduction, exile and murder. The Declaration stated that "the arrest and detention of journalists because of their professional activities was a grave violation of human rights" and urged Arab Governments which had jailed journalists for these reasons to release them immediately and unconditionally **(PI/927)**.

The document also called for priority action to establish truly independent, representative associations or trade unions for journalists, editors and publishers. International assistance to Arab countries should also aim at developing print and electronic media, independent of Governments, in order to encourage pluralism and editorial independence. The public media should be supported and funded only when it is editorially independent and where freedom of information and expression were guaranteed, according to the Declaration.

In addition, the Declaration emphasized that sound journalistic practices were the most effective safeguard against governmental restrictions and pressure by special interest groups. Participants agreed that news media professionals should be a part of any attempt to establish guidelines for journalistic standards. Arab Governments were urged to cooperate with the UN and UNESCO, as well as governmental and non-governmental development agencies, organizations and professional associations to improve and expand the training of journalists and managers.

The seminar was held in collaboration with the Government of Yemen, with funding assistance from France, the European Commission, the Danish International Development Agency and the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Three previous seminars were held in Windhoek, Namibia (1991); Almaty, Kazakstan (1992); and Santiago, Chile (1994).

UN STRENGTHENS ITS COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

Too often mention of today's youth invokes images of gang violence, drugs and teenage pregnancy. In an effort to help reverse the upward spiral of crime and provide youth with the tools needed to build a solid future, the UN adopted on 14 December a World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond **(A/50/728)**.

This Programme was five years in the making and provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and regional and international support to improve the situation of young people. It reflects the basic themes of participation, development and peace set forth by the Assembly for International Youth Year in 1985, while establishing more clearly defined targets and enhanced implementation of guidelines for youth planning. This UN agreement is historic as it represents the first time references have been made on youth rights and responsibilities regarding sexual and reproductive health.

The youth population

The world youth population, ranging in age from 15 to 24 years, as defined by the UN, was estimated to be some 1.03 billion, or 18 per cent of the world's population in 1995. The majority of the world youth population (84 per cent) lives in developing countries where circumstances are often more difficult for young people because of limited opportunities for education, training, employment, health and social services, and increased incidence of substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. Many developing countries are also experiencing unprecedented rates of rural-urban migration by young people.

World Programme of Action

The Programme, as adopted by the Assembly, identifies 10 priority areas for action: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, and the full and effective participation of youth in society and decision-making. Programme implementation has been enhanced by calling for biennial meetings of youth NGOs, inter

UN Photo / Margot Granitsas

In October 1995, the Assembly convened a special session to commemorate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year (1985).

governmental organizations (IGO) and the UN system at the world and regional levels. Plans for a World Youth Forum are underway, to improve consultation between youth NGOs, IGOs and the UN system. In addition, current regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth affairs were invited to meet regularly at the international level under the aegis of the UN.

Looking ahead

The UN has strengthened its commitment to youth by directing the international community's response to the "challenge of youth". Member States have agreed to work towards the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress, as embodied in the principles of the UN Charter. Existing conditions around the world are likely to make achieving these goals difficult: limited physical and financial State resources, racism and gender discrimination, armed conflict, increasing incidence of disease, changes in the role of the family, and inadequate opportunity for vocational education and training. However, the UN's World Programme of Action for Youth should serve as a new impetus for the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels.

The Future of Human Settlements: Good Policy Can Make a Difference

(A/CONF.165/PC.3/3/Add.1)

This document synthesizes settlements and shelter issues and trends, evaluates current and past policies and looks into the future. The following is an excerpt from the study's executive summary, prepared for the third Preparatory Committee Meeting for Habitat II, to be held at Headquarters from 5 to 16 February.

Ten Good Policies That Will Make A Difference For Sustainable Human Settlements.

1. Welcome the benefits and opportunities provided by the growth of cities, but combat urban inequality and environmental degradation. Otherwise the cost of cities will outweigh their benefits in the long term.

2. Release the energies and tap the resources of people and businesses, but don't leave everything to market forces. Governments must coordinate the actions of others, monitor, and correct abuses. Freedom to build must be balanced by a duty to protect the interests of the poor.

3. The best way to protect the interests of poor people where government resources are scarce is to attack supply constraints on a very large scale, especially in land and finance. Use positive measures (such as guided investments) rather than negative ones.

4. Strengthen the structures of urban governance and the institutions of the city -- economic, political and civic. Create an enabling framework for civic action - respect NGOs and Community Based Organizations as independent expressions of civil society. Adapt universal principles of transparency, accountability and representative governance to the local situation. Always involve women.

5. Maximize the use of public/private partnerships to draw in additional resources and capacities, but don't confuse "private" with "commercial". All partners must receive benefits from their participation.

6. Concentrate on scaling-up successful ideas, attitudes and approaches, not just projects and programmes. Use scarce public and NGO funds to lever additional resources from larger structures and institutions on a sustained basis. Strengthen links between formal and informal structures.

7. Strengthen government capacities at all levels, but don't see urban management as a panacea. Enhance local control over resource-raising and spending with accountable structures and transparent performance-monitoring. Policy can make a difference, even when resources are scarce.

8. Don't take on too much: focus on a small number of key intersectoral issues such as urban poverty, the "brown agenda", and supply constraints, and lay down time-bound goals and strategies to address them. Maximize learning.

9. Don't divorce shelter and human settlements from wider economic, political and social policies. Adopt the holistic approach.

10. Make policy according to the local situation, not imported models or ideologies. Globally-driven market economics does not supply all answers to problems of equitable and sustainable human settlements development.

Additional reports on UN Day and UN50 commemorative activities continue to reach ICS. In Lebanon, UN representatives held an anniversary reception, attended by high-level government officials as well as First Lady Mrs. Mona Hraoui. **UNIC Beirut** organized an exhibit where the Blue Book Series was prominently featured. In Jordan, UNDP and ESCWA co-sponsored a reception on UN Day, where HRH Crown Prince Hassan bin Talal inaugurated a UN50 photo exhibit, mounted by **UNIS Amman**.

UNIC Sana'a co-organized two round tables, covered by national television, and prepared a photo exhibit, which was opened by Prime Minister H.E. Abdulaziz Abdulghani on UN Day. Samir Sanbar, while in Yemen for the Arab media seminar, presented information graduates of Sana'a University with awards signed by the Secretary-General in connection with UN50.

In Cameroon, an official ceremony was held on UN Day, where former peace-keepers who had served in Cambodia hoisted the UN flag and the government presented a UN50 commemorative stamp. **UNIC Yaounde** organized a debate on the future of the Organization, drawing speakers from the Ministry of External Relations, the University of Yaounde and the UN System. A lively question and answer session followed the debate. In addition, the Centre, the Ministry of Sport and Youth and Mobil Oil Corporation, organized a 10 km Mini-Marathon. Some 350 runners, ranging from 10 to 50 years of age, competed.

Photo: UNIC Yaounde

Disabled cyclists also participated in UNIC Yaounde's UN50 Mini-Marathon.

Special events

Among the most original UN50 special events organized by UNICs was a promotion created by **UNIC Harare** entitled "Twins of the UN". UNIC identified individuals whose birthdays fell on 24 October and issued them special UN birth-certificates at a joint "birthday" celebration, sparking journalists with a different twist and local angle for their stories. **UNIC Windhoek** co-organized a special event with an interesting focus that attracted media attention: the planting of UN peace-keeper roses.

Seminars

A number of symposia, seminars and lectures have been held by the Centres in honour of the Fiftieth Anniversary. **UNIC Buenos Aires** and the Argentine Pro UN Association organized a symposium entitled "The UN of the Future". The main topics of discussion included the role of the Latin American nations, a strategy of cooperation and development in the next millennium, and UN financial problems and reform. **UNIS Vienna** participated in a panel discussion on "Social Development as the Prerequisite for International Peace and Security", co-sponsored by the UN50 Joint Organizational Committee of the Staff Councils and the Austrian Trade Unions Association. Panelists presented controversial views on both global and local aspects of social development.

UNIC Directors have been invited to speak on a number of occasions in connection with UN50: **UNIC Rome**'s Director focused on the significance of UN50 at a seminar organized by the European Association of International Studies, University Ripa Grande. The seminar was the first in a series to be devoted to the UN's Fiftieth Anniversary. **UNIC Madrid**'s Director delivered a lecture at the Royal Academy of Law entitled "UN50: Achievements and Failures". **UNIC Lisbon**'s Director spoke on the restructuring of the UN and future cooperation between the Portuguese branch of Rotary International and the Centre. **UNIC Tehran**'s Director gave a talk on "The UN's Role in the Age of Communications", at Azad University in Iran. And, in a recent interview with *The Independent Weekly*, the Director of **UNIC Lagos** discussed implementation of the UN's agenda for African women in the 1990s.

Photo: UNIC Dakar

UNIC Dakar enjoyed several young visitors from a local nursery school on their first outing to learn about the UN. UNIC also participated in the fifth International Book Fair held in Dakar, where the UN Blue Books were featured.

Publications

UNICs have been the impetus behind special UN50 newspaper supplements around the globe by providing news organizations with historical facts. **UNIC Panama** reports that the newspaper *El Panamá América* recently published a special supplement on the history and structure of the UN, aimed at primary school students. UNIC estimates that approximately 32,000 copies were distributed free of charge throughout Panama. **UNIC Windhoek** also compiled an educational supplement, focussing on UN achievements, which was distributed as an insert in Namibia's major newspapers. Copies were also delivered to 1,400 secondary schools in the country.

UNIC Lima, which has established a fruitful working relationship with the University of Lima, reports that the University's Bulletin contained a summary of the many events co-organized with UNIC, helping the Centre increase its youth outreach. **UNIC Antananarivo** published its first newsletter entitled "CINU Magazine", dedicated to the Fiftieth Anniversary. **UNIC Colombo** reports the release of the publication *The United Nations in Sri Lanka*, a collaborative effort among UN system partners, providing an overview of UN programmes in that country. The book focuses on tangible achievements made at the local and national levels, through technical and financial support from UN agencies and organizations.

Visions photo exhibit

Photos from the UN50 publication *Visions* have attracted much attention as a result of exhibits mounted by several UNICs. Recently, the exhibit was displayed by **UNIC Asunción**, with the support of the Embassy of France and the Ministry of Culture and Education. In Brazil, the Director of **UNIC Rio de Janeiro** opened the exhibit with a speech on the role the UN has played over the past five decades.

Special observances

Many Centres observed Human Rights Day on 10 December. In Peru, **UNIC Lima** gave a briefing and copies of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to high-school students and members of the school's Press Club. In addition, more than 120 intermediate-level students participated in a drawing competition, entitled "Let Us Know Our Human Rights". The participants, ranging in age from 9 to 11 years, chose themes such as hunger, slavery and war. The newspaper *El Comercio* also reprinted the Universal Declaration in its Sunday magazine and commended the UN's work in the area.

In the Philippines, **UNIC Manila** participated in a two-day workshop on Asia-Pacific Human Rights Education Programmes for Development, where it was reported that there had been a decline in human rights abuses in that country. In addition, UNIC, together with the UNA of the Philippines, organized a Human Rights Day seminar attended by some 5,000 University of Manila students. Media coverage of Human Rights Day was extensive.

UNIC Brussels reports that two Belgian UNAs organized a special event where the UNIC OIC made a statement on "The UN, its Fiftieth Anniversary and its Human Rights Programmes". UNIC also presented the Blue Book, *The United Nations and Human Rights, 1945-1995*, to the Foreign Minister and the press. **UNIC Moscow** organized a seminar attended by 30 human rights organizations, where it presented its "mini-Blue Book" entitled *The United Nations and Human Rights*. The book, produced in partnership with Human Rights Publishers, is based on the corresponding volume of the UN Blue Book Series.

UNIC LONDON MOVES

Photo: Caroline Forbes

The Secretary-General inaugurated UNIC London's new premises with Samir Sanbar, ASG for Public Information (right), and Alexander Borg Olivier, UNIC Director (centre).

While in London to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the first session of the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali took the opportunity to officially inaugurate the new **UNIC London** office. The Centre's new address is 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P4QH. The telephone and fax phone numbers remain the same.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following staff movements have occurred in ICS:

Ms. Marian Awwad has been promoted to the post of Chief, Development and Human Rights Section, PPSD/DPI as of 15 January 1996.

Ms. Hazel Burnett, Director, UNIC Jakarta, separated from service on 31 December 1995.

Mr. Khaled Khali, Chief, UNIS Bangkok, separated from service on 31 December 1995. Ms. Ja Kyong, Chief of the Library, will be OIC.

Mr. Mario Zamorano, Director, UNIC Madrid, has been transferred to UNESCO as of 1 January 1996.

POVERTY CLOCK

UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth turned on the Poverty Clock, installed in the Public Lobby at Headquarters on 17 January, illustrating that some 47 people per minute enter the ranks of the poor. The calculation, based on data from the World Bank and the UNDP Human Development Report, estimates that the current number of people living in absolute poverty is roughly 1.3 billion, increasing by nearly 25 million a year. This ceremony was organized in connection with International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996
(DPI/1677 and ISBN 92-1-100566-3). Volume VIII in the Blue Book Series, this publication provides a comprehensive account of the UN's Operation in Somalia, where the UN and the Unified Task Force (led by the US) carried out a broad mandate involving peace-keeping and peace-enforcement, as well as humanitarian aid, promoted national reconciliation and assisted in rebuilding Somalia's devastated infrastructure and institutions. The book includes an introduction by the Secretary-General and more than 100 key documents relating to the operation.

UN IN ACTION

The following videos have been produced:

- **Tajik Refugees Return Home** No. 425, Dur. 3'20"
- **Four Years After the Gulf War, UN Monitoring Programme Continues in Iraq** No. 426, Dur. 3'34"
- **Urban Security in France** No. 427, Dur. 3'36"
- **New Ways of Using Peru's Rain Forest** No. 428, Dur. 3'09"
- **Less Money and Changed Role for UN in 1996** No.429, Dur. 2'52"
- **Ugandan Villagers Learn to Live in Harmony with Mountain Gorillas** No. 430, Dur. 3'16"

DPI PROGRAMME UPDATE

A monthly publication of the Programme Support Section (PSS), Information Centres Service (ICS), DPI.
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Printed on recycled paper by the United Nations Reproduction Section